(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) to (c) Indian Airlines or Alliance Air have no immediate plans to operate air services from Gangtok due to non-availability of operational airfield there.

[Translation]

Functioning of Telephone Exchange

877. SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VERMA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the telephone exchange established in 1992 in Barkattha Block (G.T. Road) in Hajaribagh district has not started functioning so far;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the adequate staff posted there is drawing salary since 1992; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government against the officers found guilty in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) to (d) No, Sir.

A 128 port C-DOT exchange was commissioned at Barkattha in Hajaribagh district on 31.1.92 and is functioning satisfactorily. Barkattha exchange has 41 working connections. This exchange falls under Barhi SDCA and is connected to 512P C-DOT exchange at Barhi on 3 chl. G 1 system. The distance between Barhi and Barkattha is 25 KMs. The overhead line passing through thick forest area where theft of line materials takes place resulting in interuption in STD Services.

[English]

Conference of Mining Opportunities

878. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether an International Conference on mining opportunities was held in Nagpur recently;

(b) if so, the gist of the deliberations of the conference; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes Sir, International Conference on Mining Opportunities in Central India was held on 18th and 19th January, 1997 at Nagpur, Maharashtra under the aegis of Confederation of Indian Industry (Western Region) and Vidarbha Economic Development Council.

(b) and (c) The deliberations of the Conference, inter-alia, included delegation of powers to the State Governments for the renewal of the Prospecting Licences and Mining Leases for minerals listed in Part C of the First Schedule to the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, besides speeding up of the grant of mineral concessions to the needy applicants. The Central Govt. has already delegated the powers of renewal of the prospecting licences under Section 7 (2) and mining leases under Section 8 (2) of the Act to the State Governments. A Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Mines) has also been constituted with Secretaries, Mines and Geology, of the State Governments for the delegation of powers to the State Governments besides removing the bottlenecks in the grant of mineral concessions to the needy applicants.

Supply of Uniform

879. PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the TS/TM/DTS/DTM/AC staff, TXR Staff, Catering Inspectors are performing their duties in the prestigious trains like Rajdhani and Shatabdi Express trains under Eastern Railway without uniforms;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Eastern Railway authorities have failed to provide uniforms to them whereas other Zonal Railways have provided uniforms to such staff;

(c) if so, the action taken against the officials for not providing uniforms to these staff in time;

(d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to provide uniforms to these staff; and

(e) the time by which uniforms are likely to be provide to these staff?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (e) Information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the Sabha.

[Translation]

Yatri Seva Agents for Railway Bookings

880. SHRI N.J. RATHWA : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Yatri Seva agents working for railway bookings particularly in backward/rural/tribal areas of Gujarat;

(b) whether representations regarding authorising more agents in this area have been received;

(c) if so, the details thereof, State-wise;

(d) the number of applications received in this regard and the number out of them accorded approval; and

(e) the time by which the remaining applications will be accorded approval?